

Catalogue of American Amphibians and Reptiles.

Zippel, K.C., J.S. Parmerlee, Jr., and R. Powell. 1994. *Ialtris dorsalis*.

***Ialtris dorsalis* (Günther)**

Philodryas dorsalis Günther, 1858:126. Type-locality, "St. Domingo" [= Hispaniola]. Holotype, British Museum of Natural History (BMNH) 1946.1.2.77 (original number 1851.10.11.32), an adult male from "M. Sallé's Collection," collector and date of collection unknown (not examined by authors).

Ialtris vultuosa Cope, 1862 (1863):73. Type-locality, "near Jeremie, [Département du Sud] Hayti." Cotypes (2), Museum of Comparative Zoology (MCZ) 3600 (original number 1519), two adult females (the second specimen has been retagged as 177375) collected by D.F. Weinland, date of collection unknown (not examined by authors).

Dromicus mentalis Günther, 1862:128. Type-locality, "This is a West Indian snake; but from what island, we cannot say." Holotype, British Museum of Natural History (BMNH) 1946.1.9.34 (original number 1852.10.22.6), an adult male, collector and date of collection unknown (not examined by authors).

Ialtris dorsalis: Cope, 1863:594. Unjustified emendation, but see Remarks.

Ialtris dorsalis: Boulenger, 1896:137. First use of combination.

Dromicus w-nigrum Werner, 1909:222. Type-locality, "Port au Prince, [Département de l'Ouest,] Haiti." Syntypes, Zoologisches Institut und Zoologisches Museum, Hamburg (ZMH) R04106 (original number 3425), an adult, sex unknown, collected by F. Rauch, donated 31 December 1900; ZMH R04107 (original number 3169), an adult male donated on 11 August 1899 by Frau Le Bell (locality recorded only as "Westindien"); ZMH R04108 (original number 3724), a juvenile, sex unknown, donated by Gago on 5 August 1905 (locality recorded as "Sanchez, Haiti [= Dominican Republic]") (not examined by authors). See Remarks.

• **Content.** This species is monotypic.

• **Definition.** *Ialtris dorsalis* is a moderately large colubrid (maximum known SVL of males to 905 mm, females to 990 mm). Scales are smooth, not elongate, in 19 rows at midbody and with 2 apical pits. Head scale counts are 1 preocular (not reaching the frontal), usually 2 postoculars (the lower is smaller), usually 7 supralabials (the 3rd and 4th entering the orbit), and 9 infralabials (the 4th and 5th are largest). The cloacal scute (anal plate) is divided, the nasal entire, the loreal single, and the temporals 1+2. Ventrals range from 179-191 (males), 180-192 (females), and subcaudals from 99-115 (males), 98-109 (females), with no substantial sexual dimorphism. Prominent grooves occur on the enlarged posterior maxillary teeth.

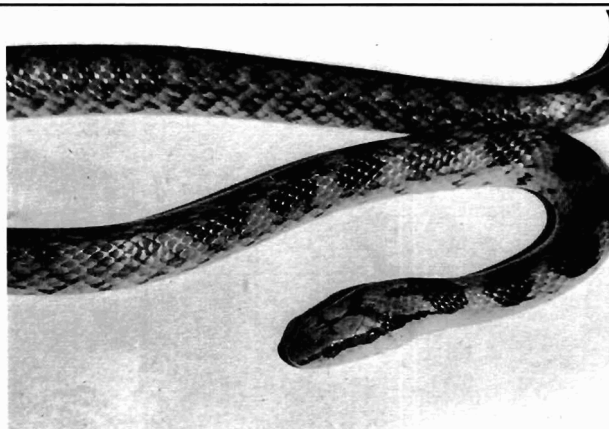


Figure 1. *Ialtris dorsalis* (LSUMZ 22072) (photograph by R.M. Blaney, from Schwartz and Rossman, 1976).

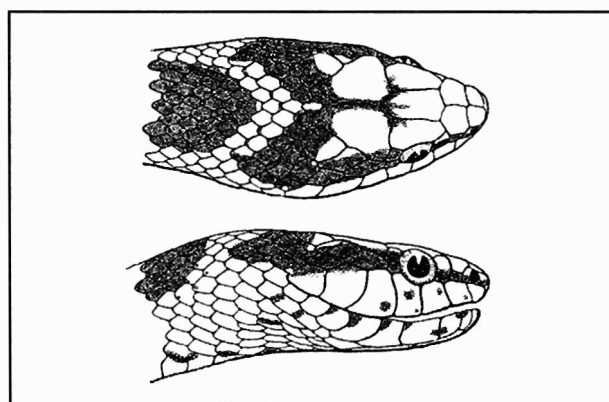
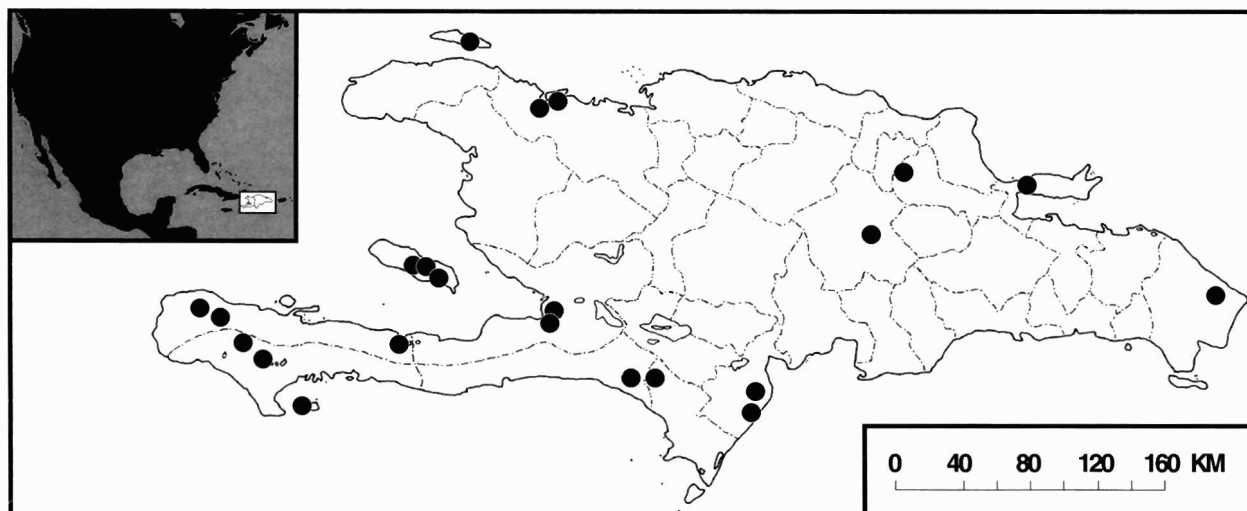


Figure 2. *Ialtris dorsalis* (USNM 60606), modified from Cochran (1941) to show the pattern on the head of an adult male from near Santa Helena, Barahona Province, Dominican Republic (BWMC).

The dorsal ground color ranges from very dark to pale olive or gray, black and yellow, or uniformly medium gray. Lighter colored snakes often are blackish brown posteriorly. Equally variable, the dorsal pattern consists of prominent black rhombic spots (single or paired), which extend a few inches behind the head and are partly confluent with a zigzag middorsal band. Some individuals give the



Map. The range of *Ialtris dorsalis* (modified from Schwartz and Henderson, 1991) is presumed to be island-wide, but rarity of specimens and broad distribution preclude any indication of an accurate range outline. The type-locality is too imprecise to plot, dots mark other known records.

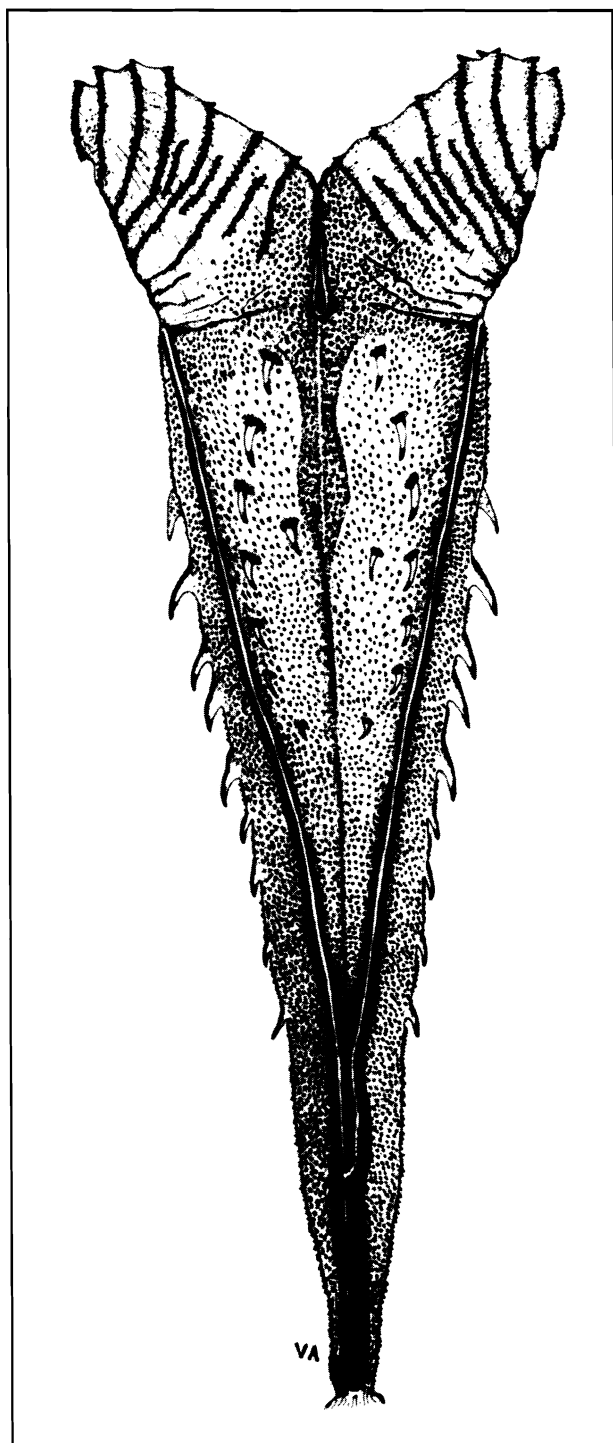


Figure 3. Hemipenis of *Ialtris dorsalis* (ASFS V11213) (from Schwartz and Rossman, 1976).

impression of being longitudinally striped. The pattern becomes less distinct posteriorly. The venter ranges in color from bluish gray to gray or brown, with or without triangular black spots on the throat, labials, and anterior ventrals. The head usually has a conspicuous black W, the arms of which originate at the nostrils or eyes and extend onto the nape; the central apex of the W (with an accessory transverse bar) is found at the level of the frontal and supraoculars and extends posteriorly between the parietal scales, bifurcates, and merges with the arms of the W behind the head.

Schwartz and Rossman (1976) provided an extensive examination of regional variations in both scalation and dorsal patterning.

The bilobed hemipenis is remarkably long, ridged with numer-

ous folds, and has an apical ornament of weakly developed flounces. The sulcus is divided, each branch terminating apically on the lateral surface of one lobe. The lobes are traversed by a series of low fleshy folds, obliquely oriented and bearing very tiny papillae. Proximal to the lobes, the organ is spinose.

• **Diagnosis.** *Ialtris dorsalis* can be distinguished from its congeners on the basis of scale counts; *I. dorsalis* has 179-192 ventrals, whereas *I. agrytes* and *I. parishi* range from 160-175. The latter two species also possess a light supralabial stripe, absent or very faint in *I. dorsalis*.

• **Descriptions.** In addition to those in references listed in the synonymy, descriptions are in Cochran (1941), Maglio (1970), Schwartz and Rossman (1976), and Schwartz and Henderson (1991). Less complete descriptions are in Cochran (1934) and Henderson et al. (1988).

• **Illustrations.** Günther (1862) and Cochran (1941) provided line drawings of the head. Schwartz and Rossman (1976) presented a photograph of a live specimen and a drawing of the hemipenis. Boulenger (1896) and Schwartz and Rossman (1976) provided line drawings of the mandible. Maglio (1970) included an illustration of the nasal bone and Schwartz and Rossman (1976) an outline of the prefrontal.

• **Distribution.** Endemic to Hispaniola, including the satellite islands of Île-à-Vache, Île de la Gonâve, and Île de la Tortue, *Ialtris dorsalis* is widely distributed yet locally rare. This species apparently is more common in Haiti, particularly on the Tiburon Peninsula, than in the Dominican Republic. *Ialtris dorsalis* is notably rare north of the Cul de Sac - Valle de Neiba plain in both countries. Altitudinal distribution is from sea level at many localities to about 1000 m in Haiti. The species seems more abundant in mesic lowland forests. The range was illustrated by Schwartz and Henderson (1991).

• **Fossil Record.** None.

• **Pertinent Literature.** Maglio (1970) speculated on the origin and phylogeny of *Ialtris* and suggested that the genus may have been derived from *Alsophis*. Schwartz and Rossman (1976) challenged that conclusion in their own examinations of interspecific and intergeneric relationships of the genus, reevaluated Maglio's data and concluded that substantive evidence supporting the derivation from *Alsophis* is lacking.

Henderson (1984), Henderson and Crother (1989), and Henderson et al. (1988) examined diet and foraging mode. Barbour (1914), Maglio (1970), and Schwartz (1980) discussed zoogeography. Schwartz and Henderson (1991) summarized information regarding natural history. Barbour (1930, 1935, 1937) and SEA/DVS (1990a) commented on the rarity and distribution of the species. SEA/DVS (1990b) provided an index of habitats for the species in the Dominican Republic.

The species is included in additional keys, trip/museum lists, checklists, and guides by Barbour (1914), Barbour and Loveridge (1929), Boulenger (1896), Cochran (1924, 1928, 1934, 1941), Cope (1879), Henderson and Schwartz (1984), Henderson et al. (1984), Obst et al. (1988), Schwartz (1971), Schwartz and Henderson (1985, 1988), and Schwartz and Thomas (1975).

• **Remarks.** Cochran (1941) listed Cope's (1879) use of *Jaltris dorsalis* as an emendation, but Cope (1863) actually first used *Jaltris* in errata and addenda to volume 14 of the Proceedings. See Smith and Wallach (1993) for additional commentary.

Schwartz and Rossman (1976) indicated that only two of the three syntypes of *Dromicus w-nigrum* Werner were extant. However, H.-W. Koepke (11.VIII.93, in litt.) noted the presence of the third specimen to which Werner (1909) had referred. This specimen was not labeled as belonging to the type-series.

• **Etymology.** The name *dorsalis* is derived from the Latin *dorsum* (= back), presumably in reference to the dorsal pattern.

• **Acknowledgments.** José P. Rosado, Museum of Comparative Zoology, Colin McCarthy, British Museum of Natural History, and Hans-Wilhelm Koepke, Zoologisches Institut und Zoologisches Museum, Hamburg, examined and kindly provided information on type specimens.

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Kevin C. Zippel, Section of Ecology and Systematics, Cornell University, Ithaca, NY 14853 (Current address: Department of Zoology, University of Florida, Gainesville, FL 32611), **John S. Parmelee, Jr.**, and **Robert Powell**, Department of Natural Sciences, Avila College, Kansas City, MO 64145.

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